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THE
BATTLE OF GROVETON

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THE BATTLE OF GROVETON.

IN the struggle through which we passed from 1861 to 1865, (a conflict on whose issue hung not alone the destiny of our nation, but as well the political and moral principles which were to dominate a hemisphere,) every battle had, with its crimson lines, a deep and ineffaceable significance. Like links in a chain, the separate battles made up the momentous war, and each bore its part of the terrible strain that tested the heart of the nation.

Upon the men who voluntarily left their homes and threw their lives into the bloody balance, it devolves to make a record of the scenes that made up the vast tragedy. Rightfully may they speak of the views they entertained, the sacrifices they made, and the sufferings they endured, and pay the tearful tributes to their comrades who fell. Indeed, it is their duty to furnish their experiences and testimonies for the use of the larger historians of our country.

To know the magnitude of the whole sum of battles stretching through four years, we must duly weigh the separate, though related, strokes struck on the different fields.

At present we speak of one battle and of the part taken in it by the First Regiment of Rhode Island Cavalry. The battle of Groveton occurred in Fauquier county, Virginia, August 28, 1862. It was one of a long, memorable series of severe battles, beginning with the gory field of Cedar Mountain, in Culpepper county, August ninth, in which our regiment played a conspicuous part, and ending with the fiery action of Chantilly, in Fairfax county, September first, which opened upon our command. Those twenty-four terrible days and nights—hot with summer heat, but hotter with strife—were a part of General John Pope's memorable campaign of "On to Richmond" with the Army of Virginia, by the way of the Rapidan, with "headquarters in the saddle," and "no base of supplies," and "no lines of retreat," as the purpose was to live upon the enemy's country. The experiment was a bold one. The greater the pity that it was not successful. Pope was brave,

but was overwhelmed by superior numbers acting on familiar ground. In those three and a half weeks, long to be remembered for their record of heroisms and scars, we formed only too intimate an acquaintance with General Robert E. Lee, General Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson, General Robert Ewell, General Ambrose P. Hill, and General James Longstreet, justly regarded as some of the ablest of the Confederate leaders.

That peculiar summer campaign will forever stand conspicuously in the memories of the cavalry forces of the Army of Virginia, since they acted such a constant and costly part in it. To the First Rhode Island Cavalry the experiences of those days and nights, of skirmishes and battles, now seem almost like wild dreams, as we bore no small part in the unceasing tragedies. We were involved in eight of the severest of the battles. At one time we were in our saddles eighty-three consecutive hours. We had in our ears for sixteen days and nights the incessant roar of cannon and musketry. For more than twenty days we did not take our coats from our shoulders, not knowing what rest or regular rations

did mean, but were constantly in motion or in action, leaving some of our comrades dead upon the different fields, some in field-hospitals, and others as prisoners in the hands of the enemy. That we were weary and wounded, covered with dust and vermin, and tanned in battle-smoke, tells only our outward condition. Our mental trials, far greater than our physical, cannot be told.

If we were so nigh exhausted and bewildered in those incessant death-grapples that such as survived to come under the friendly shadow of Miner's Hill, September fifth, found not a horse in our command that could even comfortably trot, or a comrade who could tolerably retain his saddle, on account of fatigue, it is not strange that now all those scenes should rise ghost-like to us in the retrospect. However, the leading facts were burned into our memories. The brand-marks and our journals enable us to present the story in its leading features.

Groveton occupies a point on the Warrenton turnpike, between Centreville and Gainesville, not far from the latter, east of Haymarket and Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run mountains, and northeast of the

city of Warrenton. We think the place never had any importance or fame except what was given to it by the battle of which we are to speak. The rolling lands on the north of it were termed Groveton Heights, being a low eastern foot of the Bull Run mountains. It was near fifty miles west of Washington.

Not unreasonably we may begin our narrative with some incidents of the day previous to the battle, as these will at least explain somewhat our physical condition, and also the position of the main forces in the contending armies.

The morning of August twenty-seventh found us, already weary enough, in saddle waiting fresh orders in the suburbs of the little, proud, war-bruised city of Warrenton—a place that in its *ante-bellum* dignity boasted of six hundred inhabitants—aristocratic slaveholders huddled together in their *hauteur* on this picturesque spur of the Bull Run mountains. Though we were greatly needing a little rest, having on the previous day marched to and fro full twenty-five miles, and near Sulphur Springs received some high-toned shells from the advancing “gray-backs,”

yet no repose fell to our lot, or to the lot of any others in Pope's army. The booming of artillery rolled up the mountain from the direction of Manassas, where the rebels, having outflanked us, were enjoying a brief triumph over a number of captured baggage wagons. All the Federal forces in and around Warrenton were astir, and in a very nervous condition. Our communications with Washington, both by rail and telegraph, had been cut off. Affairs were seriously complicated, and our generals were rubbing their confused heads, issuing swift orders to be swiftly obeyed. The rebels were striking us hard on our right and our rear. As a strategic matter, our forces were looking eastward toward Washington. Pope verily had his headquarters in the saddle, and was looking for better quarters and a base of supplies. Our sick and wounded were moved by cars to Catlett Station, on the Orange and Alexandria railroad; beyond that, towards Manassas, the track was in the hands of our foes. As our infantry and artillery moved off early in the day, we were left as rear-guard. Clouds of dust were raised on all the eastward-leading roads. Our regiment was the last to evacuate the city.

It was always our lot to act as van-guard, rear-guard, flankers, skirmishers and scouts. Sabres and spurs seemed to be ordained for all sorts of service on the sharp edge of peril, where there was no rest. We were ordered to the extreme right of our army, to New Baltimore, and then immediately to a place called Georgetown, though the town part was a very small affair; but small things were always municipally great in Virginia. This position brought us within three miles of Thoroughfare Gap, and directly in the face of the advancing rebel forces.

Just at night we halted on beautiful swelling land upon the fine plantation belonging to Silas Hunter. We hunted for Mr. Hunter in vain. Reports spoke of him as rendering important aid to General Lee. His plantation was in charge of a Mr. Swarts, who was not particularly glad to see us. Fixing the headquarters of our command near the embowered plantation house, we threw out nearly the whole regiment on guard picket in the direction of Thoroughfare Gap, to watch the movements of the foe. At this time, Pope's army had been almost surrounded by the rebel forces under Stuart, Ewell,

Hill and Jackson. The remainder of Lee's army, under Longstreet, with Lee himself close in the rear, was ready to press through Thoroughfare Gap. As we were on the extreme wing of our army, without support, and immediately confronting the advancing enemy, though not discovered by reason of the veil of night and the dense forests, our position was sufficiently critical. However, our nerves had become indurated, and we held our line and watched the "gray-backs" philosophically

Such as remained in the vicinity of the Hunter plantation house, having been destitute of regular rations for several days, helped themselves, without formality or giving a receipt, to apples, corn and toothsome vegetables. We are confident that a certain cask of new cider, in an out-door cellar, leaked largely at the spigot. The only difficulty about the taste of the beverage was that it reminded us of home, which was not exactly the thing to think of then. Mr. Swarts, *nolens volens*, furnished some of the field and staff officers with biscuit, which Colonel Duffie (Alfred N.) praised in true French style. No reviving sleep was here found; our eyes were on

the Army of Northern Virginia, then pouring along our front. Major P. M. Farrington, while reconnoitering near Thoroughfare Gap, captured four rebel stragglers, who informed us that Jackson was then at Manassas with thirty thousand men, and that Longstreet, with his corps, was within two miles of our position. A heavy force of rebel cavalry passed us within sight, but failed to discover us.

The morning of August twenty-eighth broke upon us in a lone condition. We were almost entirely surrounded by the enemy. Indeed, our whole army was well nigh in the grasp of the enemy. Jackson, Stuart and Ewell had passed around the right of Pope and were at Bristol and Manassas, and had a brisk but unsuccessful fight with General Hooker. They had hoped to reach our left and close us all in, but were beaten and were now falling back towards Centreville. Longstreet was on our right, having passed through the Gap.

The Federal army under Pope on this day, as nearly as can be learned, consisted of the following forces: Sigel's corps, nine thousand; Banks's corps, five thousand; McDowell's corps, fifteen thousand;

the corps of Heintzelman and Porter, eighteen thousand; in all, fifty-four thousand. The forces of Lee outnumbered ours, but we cannot give the exact figures.

We received orders to fall back from our almost isolated position near the Gap to join the forces then concentrating near Gainesville with a view of cutting off Jackson, who was hurriedly falling back from Centreville by the way of the Warrenton turnpike to unite with Longstreet. Though on the ragged edge of the enemy, beyond the reach of help in case of attack, we kept up a good appearance, as if we were a host, and moved coolly and confidently in imposing order, our plucky band playing the "Star Spangled Banner" and other orthodox national airs. This bold stroke saved us from being cut to pieces. The enemy thought we might be a brigade. At Gainesville we found a part of McDowell's corps, Sigel's corps, and the division of General Reynolds (J. G.), all feeling for the well-nigh ubiquitous corps of Jackson. Matters were exceedingly mixed. Pope was somewhere with his headquarters still in the saddle, and the saddle in

motion. He was anxiously looking for supplies and for reënforcements from McClellan. It is only a pity that McClellan did not make more haste to come to his support. It was, indeed, an exciting time. The question was, where was Jackson? There seemed to be skirmishing and virtual battles all along our lines, but where was the field for decisive action? Jackson, Ewell, Stuart and Longstreet moved with wonderful celerity, and kept themselves largely concealed from our sight, knowing thoroughly all the roads, by-paths and sheltering forests.

We finally had orders to be ready to feel for the foe beyond Gainesville, on the north side of the Warrenton turnpike, where, in mid-afternoon, had appeared evidences of the wily, swift-footed Jackson. Our command was to be in instant readiness for movement and possible action, as we were to probe the front and unmask the enemy. As usual with us on receiving such orders, we immediately detached our band, our small hospital force, all our servants with the spare horses, and sent them into a heavy cluster of forest to remain until they should hear from us.

This part of our command, while the regiment was on reconnoissance and about as the battle commenced, had a little chapter of military experience all to themselves, and one which they often recited with a good degree of appreciation. Having withdrawn into the forest, they at once, in true soldier style, hitched their horses to the tree-trunks and limbs, and collecting dry wood, kindled a fire for steeping their coffee. As they believed, a cheerful hour of rest and refreshment awaited them. Their fire was soon crackling and they stood or sat around it expectantly, telling camp stories, indulging in prophecies and waiting for their cups to boil, congratulating themselves that they were just now non-combatants and had some remnants of coffee rations. The tin cups looked well around the flourishing fire. Up through the trees and over the tree-tops rose the little column of smoke. That was enough for the sharp-eyed rebels, who knew that a group of Yankees must be below, and so, for a feeler, a "gray-back" battery dispatched a percussion shell that, curiously enough, dropped through the smoky column direct into the centre of the bivouac fire and

exploded in good style, lifting brands, cups, ashes and earth, *a la volcano*, high in the air, overturning astonished men, scattering frightened horses, and utterly demolishing the little camp. Some of the horses broke loose and were never afterwards recovered. A few of the men received slight wounds, and all had a good war story to tell.

As to our regular regimental train, we had not seen it since August nineteenth, when we left the banks of the Rapidan. Whether Quartermaster Charles A. Leonard and his men were dead or captured we did not know ; and he knew as little of us. He and we lived alike by the skin of our teeth. He got into the fight with the rebel raiders at Catlett Station, August twenty-second, and lost five of his party by capture, and afterwards lost one of his wagons in fording a stream.

We were now quite sure that we were not far from the enemy's lines. From certain clouds of dust, we suspected that Jackson, on his way from Centreville to join Longstreet, was somewhere west of the old Bull Run battle-field, and on the north side of the Warrenton turnpike. To determine his

whereabouts was our special duty. We were accompanied by a light battery moving close in our rear, and by a detail of Berdan's sharpshooters. At our head, and by the side of Colonel Duffie, rode General J. P. Hatch, by order of General McDowell.

Our forces in this vicinity were now in the main a little to the west of Groveton, on the south side of the turnpike. This Groveton was simply a place of cross-roads, where the Groveton and Sudley road crossed the Warrenton turnpike, and might have had a post office and a petty grocery. We remember but two or three buildings and some stacks, as we saw the place through clouds of dust.

We passed Groveton in good order, our skirmish line thrown out on our front and left under Lieutenant Richard Waterman (Troop F), accompanied by Berdan's sharpshooters. The battery followed close upon our column. Our eyes were open on all sides, and our sabres and carbines were ready. We expected to find Jackson on the turnpike or on Groveton Heights, just to the north. We had scarcely passed Groveton to the east when we ascended a

heavy knoll which had an exposed slope to the north towards Groveton Heights. I was riding on the left of Colonel Duffie, at the head of the column, with field-glass in hand. Sweeping the field of vision, I discovered in an opening of the woods to the north, on our left, a rebel battery dashing into position to open upon us. Pointing this out to Colonel Duffie, he directed General Hatch's attention to it. The bugle blew a halt. All field-glasses were turned upon the disclosing front of the foe. We had found Jackson, and he proposed to find us. The rebel artillery rapidly uncovered through the woods; battery followed battery into position on the elevated grounds, and soon the guns began to belch. This was near five o'clock in the afternoon.

Our column stood in order in the road, with front to the east, and was wholly exposed to the enemy. Our artillery immediately moved to the top of the knoll on our front and unlimbered and opened fire handsomely. We soon called in our skirmishers, as there was no further need for them. The enemy's artillery occupied the high ground from beyond our front to some distance beyond our rear, all along

our left flank, and soon numbered, as we could only too well count, eighteen pieces, all rapidly and handsomely handled. Our regiment and the battery by our side were their targets, as no other Federal forces were in their view, though they were not far away on the line of the turnpike to the west. There were now three batteries, of six pieces each, playing by a cross-fire directly upon us, and all within fair distance for effect, and upon high grounds. We were in a hot place. Our army, on learning that we had found Jackson and were drawing his fire, began to hurry into line and advance toward the point of attack. Jackson, in person, was on Groveton Heights, near Brawner's house.

The first rebel shells fell a little short of us. The next struck in our skirmish line, which induced Colonel Duffie to call Lieutenant Waterman and his men to the column. A rough time they had in leaving the intervalle on our left and joining us. The enemy's shells next, in main, went over us. Very soon, however, many of these martial pepper-corns began to drop directly into our column. Most of them were time-fuses and burst in the air, hurling

their fragments in every direction. Our assailants had us handsomely before them, and they played their guns splendidly. But for the peril of limb and life, the scene had the really sublime in it. It was highly sensational. The three rebel batteries that first opened on us, as we afterwards learned, were those of Wooding, Poague and Carpenter, acting with Stark's brigade. The leading rebel force was General Taliaferro's command, headed by Lawton's and Trimble's brigades ; at least, after the full tide of action set in. Just at this time, however, we seemed to be confronted by Stark's brigade.

Our position was anything but pleasing, though we had accomplished our errand of finding the enemy. The light battery by our side did its best, and deserved high praise, but it stood against fearful odds. Our sabres, of course, were powerless. No rebel cavalry or infantry as yet appeared on the front. We calmly, passively, even stubbornly, endured the storm of iron and fire. The affair seemed to us like a mixture of earthquake, volcano, thunder storm and cyclone. Even now we can hear the music, if music that could be called which was made

of howls, growls, moans, groans, screeches, screams and explosions. With six or eight of these rebel shells in the air at a time, above and around us, it was impossible to catch the key-note of the harmony. It might have been a tune for demons to dance to. The rebels evidently enjoyed it. Upon the whole, they took good aim and did their work well.

In a very few moments five of our horses lay dead. Others were cut by fragments of shells. A number of our men were wounded. Captain Charles N. Manchester (Troop D), who had long been assiduously cultivating a dew-like adornment of his upper lip, received from the fragment of a shell a cut on his face, and coolly remarked that he feared for the safety of his darling moustache. Lieutenant Lorenzo D. Gove (Troop K) had his horse killed under him, but he calmly unbuckled the saddle, took it upon his shoulder and held his place with his troop in the subsequent movements, waiting to find a spare horse, a very rare thing to find just at that time. Corporal Thomas Linerhan (Troop A) had the cantle of his saddle cut off by a ricocheting shot that

passed over his horse. He saw the missile as it approached him and sprang forward to escape it. William Keating (Troop A) had an exceedingly nervous horse, that reared and pitched at the music of the shells and turned his head from the front, so that his rider was unable to turn him again into position. A cool comrade said: "Let him be; turn around yourself in your saddle and face his tail, and be ready for action." Orderly Sergeant William Gardiner (Troop F), in obeying the recall from the skirmish line, leaped ditch and broke his saddle-girth and lost his saddle, but was not dismounted. On reaching the regiment he found the horse of one of our New Hampshire men dead, and quickly appropriated the saddle to his own use. On remounting in the short stirrups of his new saddle, he being a man of double altitude, his knees reached to the withers of his horse. At this his comrades cheered him for his fine appearance. These little incidents indicate the self-poise and nerve of the regiment.

We had effectually revealed the enemy's whereabouts, and had handsomely drawn his fire. The Federal forces lying in our rear, near to Groveton,

were soon hurried into line of battle. The enemy was also on the alert, forming his regular line. Our regiment was on the extreme right of our battle-line, and a little separated from the main body. General Hatch complimented us for our calmness and gallantry, and ordered us to fall back nearer to Groveton and join the other forces on their right. At the same time the battery and sharpshooters fell back, as it was clear that a regular fight was now before us. The shells continued to break over us, around us, and amongst us. My own horse, for the first time, from the exploding shells, became almost ungovernable and thoroughly tested his rider's equestrian qualities. Over his rearing and bounding the comrades had quite a laugh. So completely were we enwrapped with screeching and bursting shells and smoke and dust that it was reported, and generally believed in our army, that our regiment was wholly cut to pieces. But ours was a salamander's life. Neither officers nor men lost their mental balance.

In falling back to join our main force, moving in good order, in column of fours, still under the

shower of shells, one soldier's horse became restive and broke into a quick pace. At this, Colonel Duffie exclaimed, "Stop that horse! One man run, all run! What a sickness! What a business!" One of our horses had a limb mangled by a shot; still the faithful beast kept his place in the column, hobbling on his three limbs and dangling the broken one till a sympathizing soldier ended his battle career by a friendly bullet.

It was in this action that we first mistrusted that the enemy was using explosive bullets. Lieutenant-Colonel John L. Thompson says: "I have an impression that this was the first time I heard explosive bullets. I was incredulous about that kind of missile, and am still, but I know I heard peculiar noises, and asked several what caused them, and was told it was the bullets, and it sounded as if it might be so; the explanation was satisfactory." We secured no such missiles on the field. Such bullets, however, were used in the war by the enemy. Specimens of these may be seen in the cabinet of our society.

It is worthy of note how much thinking a man

will do in an hour of battle. The roar of cannon, the screeching and bursting of shells, the hissing of fragments of iron, the whistle of bullets, the smell of the battle-smoke, the plunging and falling of horses, and the surging of battalions, with brave men here and there staggering and falling from wounds, have a powerful effect in keeping up the nervous system to its highest efforts, and stimulating all the mental machinery to run to its utmost speed. One will then think in an hour more than otherwise he might in an ordinary day. Nor is there that derangement or confusion of mind which many have supposed would be inevitable. Though the thoughts are multitudinous and swift as the lightning's wing, they are orderly and clear. If saltpetre and brimstone becloud the atmosphere, they clarify the intellect and brace all the heroic powers. The flash of arms quickens the speed of thought. In the battle of which we are speaking we were really under a sort of inspiration, as men are in all sharp actions, though at the time we were quite unconscious of the greatness of the excitement. We even marvelled at our seeming coolness.

The lines of battle as first formed very nearly coincided with the Warrenton turnpike,—our forces close to the road, and the rebels to the north of us. Our forces immediately engaged consisted of General Rufus King's division of McDowell's corps, with General John Gibbon's brigade in advance, handsomely supported by General Abner Doubleday's brigade. We encountered the famous Jackson and his forces under Generals Taliaferro and Ewell, no inferior fighters. The exact numbers on both sides we could never fully determine. Both sides could certainly boast of quality. The two armies fairly grappled near six o'clock, and the smoke of the conflict was immediately so great that the sun put in a feeble appearance for the remainder of the day. Clouds of dust were added to the smoke. The enemy had the advantage of the higher ground and some shelter of forests. The artillery that first opened on us was soon so severely answered by our guns along our front as to be driven to change position.

Our regiment could witness only the fighting on the extreme right of our line, where we were posted

to make or repel a charge, as might be necessary. It would be a satisfaction to speak of the gallant behavior of other regiments in this battle if the length and nature of our paper admitted the matter. The only other Rhode Island force in this fight was Battery D, of the First Regiment of Rhode Island Light Artillery, commanded by Captain (afterwards Colonel) J. Albert Monroe. This battery was hotly engaged, and lost one caisson by blowing it up after it had been disabled by the enemy's shot. Captain Monroe had a number of men wounded and some reported missing. As the battery was near the centre of the line of battle on the left, we saw but little of its action, which, however, was reported to have been characteristically gallant.

The battle was sharp and desperate. Jackson knew how to fight, and his men had faith in him. He could march his infantry thirty miles a day and fight besides. In this battle, for fighting qualities, he found his match. Gibbon and Doubleday were enough for Taliaferro and Ewell. From the time the conflict opened on our regiment, near five o'clock, it raged without the least abatement for

nearly four hours, and was at its height from six to nine o'clock. We were never in a more determined action. Both sides were resolved to win, and fought at their best. We were under fire through the whole, and before it closed we were again brought to the extreme front on the right. It was literally an incessant tornado of artillery and musketry. Strangely enough, the enemy revealed no cavalry. The havoc on all sides was fearful. As the night shut down, the flashing fires of cannon and muskets lit up the field and the forests. Jackson attempted to dash upon us and crush us, but we unflinchingly withstood him, and even compelled him to yield something of his ground. In his report he said: "The conflict was fierce and sanguinary; the loss on both sides was heavy."

Among the rebel wounded were Generals Taliaferro and Ewell. Colonel Neff, of the Thirty-third Virginia Regiment, was killed. In his report, General Taliaferro said: "Here, one of the most terrific conflicts that can be conceived occurred; for two hours and a half, without an instant's cessation of the most deadly discharges of musketry,

round shot and shell, both lines stood unmoved, neither advancing, and neither broken nor yielding." We know how true this testimony is, and how stubborn and sanguinary that contest was. Since our enemies concede our cool courage and unyielding bravery, we can do no less than honestly acknowledge theirs. On this field, so far as gallant devotion to their cause was concerned, we found a foe worthy of our steel. The more is the pity that his cause was wrong. And so far as we were concerned, we fought not from any enmity to men as such, but from opposition to an unrighteous cause and a system that opposed itself to the peace of our country and the liberties of mankind. Jackson was a conscientious man, and hence such a desperate fighter. But he found as much conscience keyed to the fighting pitch on our side.

It is not possible to give a pen-sketch of the battle as it raged that night from seven to nine o'clock, under the pall of night, thickened by clouds of smoke and dust, pierced by flashing guns and flaming missiles. The very atmosphere seemed to be incessantly torn in pieces. But the ghastly scene

and roar of arms, though impossible to be depicted, can never be forgotten. Only soldiers can imagine it.

When from darkness and physical exhaustion the conflict ceased at about nine o'clock, our regiment stood on the front, on the north side of the road, near a wood. We were ordered, like the rest of the forces, to rest on our arms. We held our horses by their bridles, and endeavored to catch a little restful breath. As to sleep, we had not indulged in that luxury for some days, and this was a poor place in which to make any such venture. Still a few of our men struck out into dreamland. The infantry near us, on our left, threw themselves on the earth and were soon fast asleep. Our position on the right of the line, and the care of our horses, suffered us no such liberty.

Our army held the field. In this fight, Jackson gained no advantage. Both armies lost heavily, the enemy losing the most; the number of dead and wounded we cannot fully give, as the reports of this battle were mixed with the actions of other days in that stormy campaign. We know that the losses

amounted to thousands. We had many horses killed, and both men and horses wounded. We lost but one man by capture, Corporal T Leary (Troop E), whose horse gave out in the action. The losses were heaviest near the centre of our line.

Soon after the close of the battle, before midnight, General Lee, having come through Thoroughfare Gap, reënforced Jackson with Longstreet's command, when the conjoined rebel forces moved early in the night and flanked our army on the west. Of necessity our forces about midnight were obliged to fall back toward Manassas Junction. As in all similar cases, our regiment was designated as rear-guard, and was the last Federal force to leave the field. So critical was the situation that all orders were given in a whisper. As these passed along the front, we were equally surprised and pained. The regiments and batteries, rousing themselves from their exhaustion and half-slumber, moved off slowly and in profound silence. That silence of a summer midnight on that gory field, under those critical circumstances, was more oppressive to the heart, more painful, more terrible, more piercing to

our innermost natures than the thunder of battle and the hour of carnage. To leave a well-fought field strewn with our dead and wounded, giving all to the mercy of such foes as were pressing upon us, was a thought intolerable. Never were our sensibilities more wounded. Many of the dead and dying were necessarily left on the field. Our orders admitted of no delay. We took with us as many of the sufferers as we could. Every available ambulance was crowded to its utmost. The wounded were crying for water; many of them were dying. Probably in all our regiment there was not a pint of water to be found. Thus to abandon comrades on the field, some to perish where they had so bravely fought, others to become victims of Libby Prison and Belle Isle, was an experience that wrung our hearts with anguish and filled our eyes with tears. Both officers and soldiers unite in declaring that this was one of the most trying hours of the whole war. Soldierly fellowships are inexpressibly deep and tender. In this agony of mind, obedient to orders, we turned when all others had left, and fell slowly, cautiously back toward Manassas. That slow, dark march, at

dead of night, as rear-guard of the army, from that bloody field, over other fields lately torn by the plowshare of battles, was itself a chapter of history, a type of Pope's campaign, full of doubts, fears, resolutions and hopes that live in the memory like a horrible dream. But there was no dream about it; all was painful reality.

The full recollections of that sanguinary action, with others kindred to it, though now shaded and softened by time and the political and moral changes that have passed upon our country in the score of subsequent years, cannot be expressed by pen or voice. Pope did what he could, and deserves our praise. We wish we could say as much of all his subordinates during the next three days. The cavalry arm was never suspected of being wanting. Ah! what secrets of experience remain in the breasts of the actors in that campaign; the burning purposes; the high resolves; the imminent perils; the brave efforts; the alternating hopes and fears; the indifference to pain and death for ourselves; the devotion to country; the determination to overthrow the rebellion; the terrific battle-strokes;

the sight of dying friends and foes,—all these deep experiences and tragic scenes return to us, but strangely calmed, chastened, and made even sacred by the final issues of the great strife of which they were a part, and the knowledge that our sufferings and losses were not in vain, but for the advancement of freedom and the future welfare of our nation and our continent. Our animosities were never against persons, but against treason, disunion and oppression. All have now subsided with the expiration of the evil causes. Our once fervid and irresistible passion of patriotism, though still the same, may now be said to be latent in us, having grown calm in the serene air of our country's peace, security and prosperity. Never, however, can we forget the struggle; never ought we to do so. The flail of war threshed out the wheat of freedom. Loyalty triumphed. Treason was vanquished. Slavery died in the fight that it challenged. The "Boys in Blue" may tell the story

